SOCIOECONOMIC EFFECT OF PIRACY ON BOOKS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This work examined the socio-economic effect of piracy on books publishing industry in Nigeria. The publishing sector has grown to be an essential component of the Nigerian society and economic driver because it support and promote cultural and intellectual properties of the country and its people. This very important sector is affected by piracy, particularly the socioeconomic effects on the publishing industry, causing revenue loss and economic drain, impact on authors and creative professionals, decreased investment in the industry, job losses and economic displacement, government revenue losses, and hindrance to cultural and educational development. This review discusses the concept of piracy, types of piracy, the extent of piracy and causes of piracy in the society. The study concluded that piracy cannot be allowed to continue in Nigeria, as such all the stakeholders especially authors, publishing industry, and the government needs to come together to ensure judicious application of the following way forward: Strengthening Intellectual Property Laws, Awareness Campaigns, Adoption of Digital Rights Management (DRM), Promoting Affordable Books, Collaborating with International Partners, and Encouraging Local Publishing Initiatives. By applying the way forward it is believed that the menace brought by the activities of books piracy in the general perspective would be effectively tackled.

Keyword: Effect; Piracy; Publishing; Publishing Industry, Socioeconomic

Introduction

Book piracy in Nigeria has become a significant concern, impacting the publishing industry both economically and culturally. Pirated books are widely available in markets such as Onitsha, Aba, and Lagos, often imported from countries like China and Indonesia, where production costs are lower, and copyright enforcement is less stringent. The financial repercussions of book piracy are profound. Estimates suggest that pirates control up to 70% of the Nigerian book market (The Guardian Nigeria, 2020). This dominance leads to significant revenue losses for legitimate publishers and authors, who face reduced sales and royalties. Additionally, the government's tax revenues are diminished, as pirated books are sold without contributing to tax collections.

Piracy undermines the creative industry by discouraging originality and innovation. Authors and publishers are less motivated to produce new works if their creations are likely to be pirated, leading to a stagnation in cultural development. This environment also discourages investment in the publishing sector, further hindering growth and development (Ahmadu, 2018). The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) has taken steps to combat book piracy. In 2023, the NCC reaffirmed its commitment to curbing piracy in the book sector, emphasizing the importance of collaboration with publishers and the use of new technologies, such as the 4D hologram device, to authenticate books. Despite these efforts, challenges remain in effectively enforcing copyright laws and reducing the prevalence of pirated books in the market. As piracy is more prevalent these days, a proper knowledge and understanding can help everyone to stay away from these kinds of misconducts. So, in this article many important points of socioeconomic effects of piracy are discussed. This will help to get a proper understanding of how piracy has affected the socio-economic activities of the people in the larger society so that adequate measures can be taking.

Piracy

The English word 'Pirate' comes from the Latin word- piracy, which loosely means "sea robber". Sea pirates have existed for thousands of years. They have been in operation for as long as sea travel itself has existed, just as robbery on land has been around since men began to walk the Earth. Intellectual content owners use the term Piracy to equate copyright infringers with thieves. It was shortly after the invention of the Mechanical Printing Press in 1439 that the term 'pirate' came to be applied to those who made unauthorized copies of publications. The press revolutionized the spread of knowledge in all fields of human endeavor, as well as increasing literacy in the broader community.

However, it also introduced an entirely new problem for authors: prior to the press, it was difficult for people to duplicate an entire book without permission, and most certainly not on any scale worth worrying about. The press instantly changed all that, and both the printers and the authors of works soon sought protection, both for economic reasons, as well as to ensure that their works remained unaltered and authors were duly credited (Ghazi, 2012) Piracy equals Copyright Infringement. Modern Copyright is an international legal concept as specified by the Berne Convention first signed in 1886, an agreement to which almost every country in the world is now bound as part of their World Trade Organization membership. Copyright is intended to ensure that those who create original works can maintain exclusive rights over how those works are reproduced and distributed. However, this effective monopoly only applies for a fixed period of time after the creator's death, generally from fifty to a hundred years, after which the work can then usually be distributed and used without requiring permission. There

are also Fair Use provisions that allow people to use protected copyrighted works at any time without the creator's explicit permission in a limited range of scenarios, such as in reviews, or for use by educational institutions. The practice of piracy is widespread in all regions of the world. Any publishing and related industries of countries that have not acceded to the international intellectual property agreements have traded in pirated products on a particular large scale. Piracy is not concern with only print format of information but also with non – print format.

Smith (2019) also noted that the internet has given book pirates an effective way to spread their illegal works, with websites, file-sharing platforms, and social media channels becoming common places for the illegal exchange of books. Some pirates even go so far as to compile entire databases of pirated works that are available for free download. Effective file-sharing protocols, robust scanning tools, and high-speed internet have made it simpler for pirates to disseminate stolen content to a large audience. As e-books and audiobooks have grown in popularity, digital piracy has emerged as a more common type of infringement. It is simpler to copy and distribute books when people have the tools and software to get around digital rights management (DRM) safeguards (Bishop, 2020).

The unlawful dissemination of scholarly and research materials is one of the areas of book piracy that is becoming increasingly concerning. The free or inexpensive distribution of pirated textbooks, journal articles, and research papers affects not just writers but also academic institutions that depend on sales and subscriptions (Rendleman, 2021). He restated that copyright infringement lawsuits are frequently used in legal actions against book piracy, but that enforcement is made more difficult by the anonymous nature of the internet and the usage of proxy servers to conceal the names of pirates. Piracy persists despite the fact that some nations have reinforced their intellectual property laws, especially in areas where enforcement is laxer.

Types of Books Piracy

1. **Digital Piracy**

   Digital piracy primarily involves the unauthorized sharing or distribution of eBooks. With the proliferation of online platforms and peer-to-peer file-sharing networks (e.g., torrents), pirated books can be accessed and downloaded globally. Websites that host pirated eBooks and forums where users share them anonymously complicate the enforcement of copyright laws. Additionally, advances in digital tools have made it easier to circumvent Digital Rights Management (DRM) protections, leading to more widespread piracy.

2. **Physical Piracy**

   Physical book piracy involves the unauthorized printing of books, often in developing countries where enforcement of copyright laws is weak. These pirated copies are sold at a much lower price than the original, which can be a major concern for authors and publishers, especially in markets where books are sold at premium prices.

The Extent of Piracy

Piracy on literary works can be extended upto many forms:

(i) Conversion or transmutation of original work in unauthorized way.

(ii) Reproduction of books either by reprinting or by other possible ways for wholesale rate.

(iii) Making Xerox of books and journals for business / Commercial/ money making purposes.

(iv) With the progressive evolution in the digital technologies, piracy is taking a new direction and dimension. Piracy in the field of literary works is more pronounced than that of in magazines, article, newspapers etc.

(v) In the field of book piracy, the novels, text books and other study materials are much more susceptible of piracy due to its high demand in the society.

The extent of book piracy can be estimated by overseeing the total sale. However, we can predict only the value of the production which comes out from the publishing industry. But to find the extent of pirated work we will have to focus on pirated sales, which is practically not easy.

Publishing

The publishing sector is essential to society because it facilitates the exchange of information and production of diverse information resources such as prints and electronic books, newspapers, magazines, blogs, aggregated search engines. One of the distinguishing natures of publishing is that it allows us to enjoy a variety of stories, investigate many viewpoints, and keep abreast of current events. It operates traditionally (mostly print-based) and digitally (mostly electronic-based, and leverage on information and communication technologies support platforms); both the traditional and electronic-based publishing is a vital component of communication and knowledge dissemination. Publishing role extends beyond providing society with reading materials. The development of intellectual culture is inextricably linked to publishing infrastructure. The nexus between intellectual life and business is publishing. It gives participants in intellectual endeavors business experience. Creative persons can find work in publishing (Ahmadu, 2018).

Since prehistoric man painted on cave walls, people have been publishing information for thousands of years, and it is impossible to depict every breakthrough in publishing. One of the oldest industries in Nigeria's history is book publishing, which began about 68 years before the various peoples of the country were united to form the geographical entity known as Nigeria in 1914. The first printing press in Nigeria was established in Calabar, the current capital of Cross River state, in 1846, or 165 years ago (2011–1846) by Reverend Hope Waddell of the Presbyterian church of Scotland Mission. This press's main purpose was to publish Bible lessons, but it also produced school math books later on (Ajibade 2003). In 1859, five years after the first printing press was established in Calabar, Henry Townsend of the Church of Missionary Society (CMS) opened a second press in Abeokuta, the current capital of Ogun state, to print the country's first newspaper, called "Iwe Iroyin," a dialect newspaper. The result of Henry Townsend's seed is CMS Press, which has published hundreds of books in Nigeria.

From that moment, publishing started increasing in Nigeria with diverse ambitions for the business. Sometimes, these objectives define the genre of books some publishers print while others undertake wide publication without bias. The publishing sector has seen some major technology developments in the twenty-first century. E-books, print-on-demand, and accessible publishing are some examples of these developments. Since 2005, the number of e-books available in key publishing markets including the USA and the UK has been rapidly increasing. Leading companies in collaborating with publishers and libraries to digitize books include Google, Amazon.com, and Sony.

Social and Economic Effect of Books Piracy on Publishing Industry

The socioeconomic effect of book piracy on the Nigerian publishing industry is multifaceted, causing revenue loss and economic drain, impact on authors and creative professionals, decreased investment in the industry, job losses and economic displacement, government revenue losses, and hindrance to cultural and educational development (NCC, 2021, Aina & Alabi, 2020, Ogunleye, 2019 and Abubakar, 2018).

Piracy leads to substantial financial losses for publishers, authors, and other stakeholders in the book production and distribution chain. According to a study by the Nigeria Copyright Commission (NCC), the publishing sector in Nigeria loses billions of Naira annually due to piracy (NCC, 2021). These losses occur because pirated books are sold at a fraction of the price of the original, making it difficult for legitimate businesses to compete. Consumers, lured by lower prices, often purchase pirated copies, undermining the market for authentic products. The Nigerian publishing industry is already grappling with high production costs, including printing, distribution, and marketing expenses. With piracy siphoning off significant revenue, publishers are often unable to recoup their investments. This financial strain reduces the incentive for publishers to invest in new titles, leading to fewer publications and less diversity in the market (Aina & Alabi, 2020).

In the same vein, Authors and other creative professionals are often the most affected by piracy in the publishing industry. The unauthorized distribution of books means that authors lose income from book sales and royalties. In Nigeria, where many authors depend on the revenue generated from book sales, piracy can significantly diminish their earnings. This undermines the financial stability of authors, discouraging them from continuing their creative work or producing new books (Abubakar, 2018). Moreover, the prevalence of piracy can result in the erosion of the quality of literary work. Faced with the loss of income from pirated books, authors may reduce the quality of their output or avoid publishing altogether. This can lead to a reduction in the diversity and quality of literature available to readers in Nigeria.

Similarly, Piracy has a chilling effect on investment in the Nigerian publishing industry. Both local and foreign investors are less inclined to invest in an industry where intellectual property rights are poorly enforced. When piracy thrives unchecked, it creates an environment where legal and financial risks are high, making publishers hesitant to embark on new projects. According to Ogunleye (2019), the publishing industry's vulnerability to piracy diminishes its appeal as a profitable venture, leading to a decline in both local and international investment. Without the assurance of adequate protection for their intellectual property, publishers face the constant risk of having their work copied and sold without compensation. This creates a climate of uncertainty that stifles innovation and the growth of the sector. Furthermore, piracy discourages potential partnerships between Nigerian publishers and international publishers, who fear that their intellectual property may be compromised.

In addition, the effects of piracy extend beyond publishers and authors to the broader economy. The publishing industry provides jobs in areas such as printing, distribution, sales, and marketing. When piracy undermines the profitability of legitimate publishers, it can lead to reduced hiring and even job cuts. According to Adebayo (2020), piracy in the Nigerian publishing sector has contributed to the displacement of workers in both large and small publishing firms, as companies are forced to scale back operations or close entirely due to financial losses. This phenomenon also affects related industries, such as bookstores, transportation companies, and printing presses. As pirated books flood the market, legitimate bookstores struggle to maintain sales, leading to reduced demand for physical retail space and services. This cascade effect leads to a contraction in the overall economy, affecting many sectors that rely on a vibrant publishing industry.

Also the Nigerian government suffers from piracy in the publishing industry. Taxes and royalties from book sales constitute a source of revenue for the government. However, with pirated books dominating the market, the government loses out on tax income generated from legitimate sales. Moreover, piracy often thrives in informal markets, making it difficult for the authorities to track and collect taxes from illegal sales (Osime, 2019). The government's inability to curb piracy further exacerbates the loss of potential revenue and undermines efforts to foster a robust creative economy.

Furthermore, piracy in the publishing industry can also hinder Nigeria's cultural and educational development. Books play a vital role in fostering literacy, education, and cultural identity. With the rise of pirated copies, the quality of educational materials, including textbooks, is compromised, as pirated versions are often of inferior quality. This not only affects the quality of education but also undermines efforts to build a knowledge-based economy (Olatunji, 2021). Piracy impacts the ability of publishers to produce and distribute culturally relevant materials. With a reduced capacity to generate income, publishers are less likely to invest in works that reflect the nation's unique cultural heritage, thereby limiting the availability of locally produced literature for both domestic and international audiences.

The issue of piracy is made worse by Nigeria's ineffective enforcement of intellectual property laws. Law enforcement is inadequate, and the nation's legislative frameworks for protecting intellectual property rights (IPR) are frequently poor. Lax enforcement and the frequent impunity of people engaged in illicit operations are conducive to the growth of piracy (Okpara, 2023). As a result, the publishing sector finds it difficult to defend its rights, and the general public begins to doubt the legal system's capacity to stop piracy.

Socially, piracy promotes an intellectual theft culture in which people undervalue innovative endeavors and their capacity to advance society. The younger generation is influenced by this unfavorable view of intellectual property rights, which leads to a tendency of piracy in fields other than publishing, such as software, music, and movies. Consequently, this undermines the long-term growth of Nigeria's knowledge-based economy (Daramola, 2020). The availability of pirated textbooks in educational institutions feeds a vicious circle of impunity, where students may believe they have a right to access resources without paying the authors.

Causes of Piracy in the Society

Pirated products are typically offered at discounted costs to draw in customers, it is commonly believed that many people do this illegal crime for financial benefit. Over time, this lowers the original authors' and publishers' profit. The following are some common reasons and justifications for creating illegal copies:

1. Poverty. Piracy in Nigeria is shaped by poverty which is a state of deprivation of social and financial inequality. Many people who are unable to secure employment, poor, and exposed to publishing activities take to piracy as source of livelihood.

2. Ignorance and Lack of adequate information about copyright processes and laws. Many individuals are not fully informed on what piracy and copyright is, and therefore don't know it is a criminal offense. To deter people, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization said that "Piracy lacks the negative social stigma that would make the public realize that it is a criminal activity" (UNESCO, 2015). With such sensitization and attacks on pirates and pirated works Nigerians should distaste pirated works.

3. The high cost of publishing in Nigeria leads to increase in the cost of essential text books. This has caused many people to patronize pirated works because of the relatively cheap price at the detriment of the publishers and authors benefits.

4. Inability to gain access to original products: Many book titles are scarce in the book market and of high demand, pirates use this situation to carry out their nefarious activities which has to be stopped.

5. Poor funding of regulatory agencies, such as the Nigeria Copyright Commission, etc. renders these institutions less effective and responsive for carrying out their legitimate duties.

6. People indulge in piracy in greed of quick money.

7. Usually occurs in books that are popular and of high demand in the school system

Many good papers, journals, books are of too high price to subscribe, most of the people cannot afford that much so they follow the pirated sites on the internet to get a copy of that paper of interest either at low cost or for free and researcher prefer those pirated sources of information because at less price they get the same information as the original work contains.

Conclusion

Book piracy is a significant issue that undermines the growth and sustainability of Nigeria's publishing industry. Its effects are far-reaching, from financial losses to job cuts, and it hampers creativity and intellectual property protection. However, by strengthening intellectual property laws, raising awareness, adopting DRM technologies, and promoting affordable and local publishing initiatives, Nigeria can mitigate the negative impacts of piracy. A concerted effort from the government, publishers, authors, and readers is necessary to protect the literary ecosystem and ensure that Nigeria's publishing industry thrives.

Way Forward

From the conclusion, it is pertinent that a calibrated strategy is required to strengthen the cooperation between the government and the publishing industry in Nigeria to be able to curb piracy in the publishing sector. In order to achieve this goal, the following actions should be prioritized:

1. **Strengthening Intellectual Property Laws**

   One of the most effective ways to combat book piracy is to strengthen the enforcement of intellectual property laws in Nigeria. The Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC) should increase its efforts to monitor and enforce copyright protection laws. This includes conducting regular raids to seize pirated books from local markets and prosecuting offenders. Additionally, the government should impose stricter penalties for piracy to deter offenders.

2. **Awareness Campaigns**

   Raising awareness about the negative impacts of book piracy is crucial in changing consumer behavior. The Nigerian government, in collaboration with publishers and authors, should embark on public education campaigns aimed at informing readers about the importance of purchasing legitimate copies of books. These campaigns can highlight the detrimental effects of piracy on the literary industry, including job losses and the stifling of creativity.

3. **Adoption of Digital Rights Management (DRM)**

   As digital piracy becomes more prevalent, publishers and authors in Nigeria should adopt Digital Rights Management (DRM) tools to protect their works in digital formats. DRM technologies can help prevent unauthorized copying and distribution of e-books. While not foolproof, DRM can significantly reduce piracy by making it more difficult for pirates to distribute unauthorized copies.

4. **Promoting Affordable Books**

   One of the reasons why piracy thrives is the high cost of legitimate books. Many Nigerians cannot afford to purchase original copies due to economic constraints. Publishers can address this issue by introducing affordable pricing strategies, such as offering books in different formats (e.g., e-books, paperback editions) or establishing discount programs for students and libraries. By making books more accessible, publishers can reduce the incentive for readers to turn to pirated copies.

5. **Collaborating with International Partners**

   Given the global nature of digital piracy, Nigerian publishers should consider collaborating with international organizations and publishers to fight piracy. Organizations such as the International Publishers Association (IPA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) can provide resources and support for combating piracy on a global scale. These collaborations could involve sharing best practices, technologies, and strategies for tackling piracy.

6. Encouraging Local Publishing Initiatives

To reduce reliance on foreign publishers and their associated pirated versions, Nigeria can invest in local publishing initiatives. By strengthening local publishing houses and supporting indigenous authors, the government and publishers can create a robust local industry less susceptible to piracy. Encouraging local authors to publish in Nigerian languages and promoting Nigerian literature in international markets can help establish a strong, piracy-resistant publishing ecosystem.

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